

--Julia Lesage

How can we always identify what is Godardian when we look at a film by Godard? Surely the continuity and development of Godard's aesthetics and <sup>of</sup> his political concerns stand out most sharply when we look at his films visually, that is, in terms of the content and composition of his shots. Godard is unique in the way he deals with images, and he introduced into feature films very specific kinds of distancing effects. In particular, it is on the level of the shot that his distancing techniques are most clearly defined.

From Breathless on, his use of jump cuts, hand-held camera and elliptical editing made us look at familiar outdoor settings in a new way. In the films before 1968 Godard particularly enjoyed playing off contradictory elements against each other--the realistic alongside the implausible, written signs juxtaposed against other images, static interviews followed by rapid action, thingness vs. living people--in a narrative used to reveal the incoherence of events. And although he did not <sup>always</sup> set himself the task of analyzing social process, in each of his films his portrayal of our whole visual cultural milieu has been both concrete and stimulating of abstraction about social process. He strips the familiar of its inconspicuousness.

In all his films the clash of seemingly discontinuous shots throws each shot into mutual relief; the characters are presented visually in contradictory ways; the camera swings back and forth, catching a detail at the edge, framing a character in an unexpected way. Sometimes the camera movements seem gratuitous, and sometimes Godard's use of extremely long takes and traveling shots makes the audience wonder what he could possibly show next before cutting to another shot. Thus the editing, the composition of the frame, the angles of the shots and the color control <sup>by</sup> lead the spectator to consider previously taken-for-granted elements in a new way and to consider them intellectually. Godard sometimes uses these techniques ironically or satirically, as in his fondness for ketchup-colored blood, and sometimes to comment on conventional film and television practice and on the ideology of film form--as in his eye-level close ups of someone talking to the camera in interview style.



Increasingly, in his attack on unreflective photographic representation, Godard uses the human figure, costume, gesture, action, and locale not for their iconic, representational value, but in a totally stylized and symbolic way. In the post-68 films he drastically reduces the connotations carried by images; they must be read as emblems. Furthermore, he has always used the written word imaginatively, especially the title frames which call attention to both the linguistic form and the social use of the words presented on the screen. Finally, Godard incorporates other filmic texts into his films, thus commenting on his own departure from and debt to the very texts cited. His films thus become self-reflexive texts, a kind of art criticizing art; increasingly, from 1966 on, he uses stylization to make a political point about film form.

#### DISLOCATING SHOTS

Godard's juxtaposition of and implicit commentary on entire modes of discourse--both cinematic and extra-cinematic--his insertion of seemingly undigested documentary material from his own milieu, and his use of single shots to represent whole political concepts are all of as much interest to the film viewer as the story line or, in the later films, as the exposition of a political idea. Such shots are characteristically outside the cohesive fictional world of the film's narrative (in semiotic terms, they are called *non-diegetic inserts* in the film's *diegesis*). Godard uses such inserted material specifically for its "distancing" function; that is, it makes us notice the film as a film, breaks down narrative tension, interferes with the seeming naturalness of cinematic representation, and provides independent images outside the narrative flow which may reflect on the narrative by association but do not contribute to the story line. He expects us to do two things with non-diegetic inserts: to acknowledge the content of the shot, now also invested with additional connotations through its relation to the narrative development, and to consider it in terms of our own cultural and social experience.

Godard's use of non-diegetic material is not just modernist or merely playful, although he obviously enjoys its wit. He neither challenges the meaning of meaning



nor indicates that only hypotheses, and not truths, could be gained from the content--unlike, for example, Resnais in Last Year at Marienbad. Rather he keeps intact the referential aspect of the documentary material, the inserted photos, the film clips, and the advertisements, and expands upon their conventional meaning. The material gains impact from the way it is edited into the film, and because of its abrupt presentation we notice the uniqueness of the isolated images; this is especially so of the elements of Godard's urban milieu--its people, language, signs, color patterns, planes, architecture, and culture. In other words, a collage technique generally reinforces a sense of artifice while still preserving the heterogeneity of the inserted elements, which are not then reduced to merely advancing the plot as, for example, a shot of a "wanted" poster does in a Western.

In the more political films, non-diegetic inserts act as Brecht said titles or back projections should, that is as footnotes which introduce some extra bit of related information for the spectator's intelligent consideration. They remind us, the audience, that our world is outside the film's action, and at the same time they convey a sense of the interrelation of artistic, linguistic, iconic (visual representation), architectural, sexual, class and economic structures both within the film and in the world. We are constantly led to reflect on how the representation of these structures and Godard's own film technique interact within the film as modes of discourse. He examines the various levels of how people communicate within a particular historical context.

In any given shot in a Godard film, especially one that makes a social comment, multiple reflections on the way that shot functions are forced on the spectator all at once. For example, a shot of a book title stands out as a tight, static close up visually unrelated to what has just been seen, especially if juxtaposed against shots of dramatic action. At the same time, the book title has its own referential value--both in what the words say and in what we may or may not know about the author and the author's intellectual position and role in France. Godard may use the color of the book jacket ironically, especially red, white or blue. We notice whether it



stands in contrast to or reinforces something else in the film. If it follows an interview or a monologue, or is accompanied by music shown in the previous scene to be coming from a juke box, then its significance lies not only in the words presented in the title but also in Godard's juxtaposition of modes of discourse.

#### FRAMING AND COMPOSITION

In Godard's films, the composition of the frame often develops character or advances the narrative in an unexpected, distanciated way. In The Married Woman Charlotte is often filmed on the streets against huge billboards as a small alienated figure. When we see her at a swimming pool directing the photographing of models, the images of the models are flashed on the screen in negative, positive, and negative again, reflecting Charlotte's own confusion about her identity as a woman, a confusion compounded as she is inextricably caught up in a world of images. Her romantic difficulties with husband and lover are filmed in a technique similar to that used in other films such as Le Petit Soldat, Contempt, and La Chinoise, where two lovers or husband and wife constantly move in and out of frame as the camera moves or stays still in a long take, a visual symbol of their coming together and moving apart.

Ordinarily in fictional films, conventionally codifiable physical features such as the eyes and face let us "know" a character and also carry narrative meaning. In contrast, Godard especially from 1964 on, deliberately uses expressionless close ups, often with a voice off relating that character's story or analyzing the social group or predicament that determines that character's situation. He may film people to show them as alienated, as mere objects in the contemporary milieu, as opaque desensitized beings. In Weekend he filmed a group of impassive observers of an auto accident in family-snapshot style against an Esso billboard, followed by the title FAUXTOGRAPHE ("false" photo). In his presentation of female characters, rather than use photography conventionally to encourage the audience's romantic yearning, identification, or desire, Godard instead films women so as to comment on such conventions. In Two or Three Things I Know About Her he uses extreme close ups of Marina Vlady's passive face, very often cut off at the forehead; these expressionless shots indicate both



her self-alienation and our own ignorance about the minds and lives of middle-class-aspirant proletarian women in a consumer society. In the beginning of that film Godard introduced Vlady, in his own voice off, as an actress. We see her in a series of medium shots taken from different angles on the porch of an urban apartment building. Sometimes she is making a gesture, sometimes looking directly at the camera. Not only does Godard use a specifically Brechtian technique to introduce Vlady as an actress, but because of the visual style, the way of filming her from the very beginning, the film's artifice is made obvious and inhibits participation in a story as a lived experience or identification with this character, Juliette.

The actions of the characters are often not continued naturalistically from one shot to the next; a sequence of actions may be connected by jump cuts, gestures may be repeated, or a character may be shown giving a set speech separated from the dramatic action, such as in Tout Va Bien. Characters may perform actions in a single plane parallel to the camera. Such a filming technique creates a high exaggerated visual flatness and is used especially in the films from Le Gai Savoir on, although found often in the films before that. In Made in U.S.A. and La Chinoise the characters are frequently filmed standing against a wall. In many films they are shown addressing the camera directly, lit from the front, and not performing any action except talking--if that. In Wind from the East and Struggles in Italy, the human figures (one can no longer call them characters) are shown either in symbolic static tableaux or performing very minimal symbolic gestures. In Le Gai Savoir, Godard exaggerates a technique of visual repetition, developed earlier in films such as The Married Woman. He films Berto and Leaud in a minimalist way against a darkened background and manipulates their positions and glances in a way that leads the spectator to consider the various visual combinations possible within a given cinematic image. In Tout Va Bien, Vladimir and Rosa, and Le Gai Savoir, Godard has a man and a woman repeat the same minimal gestures; in the latter two films, while one is positioned behind the other. Such images symbolize sexual role playing, and the switching of positions symbolizes women's struggles to change power relations between the sexes.



In the films from 1967 on, we do not and cannot make the lives and the feelings of the characters our own as they speak like they are quoting a third-person text, turn to the camera to show the process of acting, and are developed in a non-psychological way.

#### DOCUMENTARY REFLECTIONS

Godard subverts and redirects the meaning of common images, ads, and film and television styles. Over and over again he takes up the question of newsreel style filming vs. art. He challenges the modes, possibilities, distortions and limits of communication within our milieu. What are roles? What are dangerous lies? What are fictions? What kind of filming is best suited to give us the truth? And what does the newsreel, the television interview or the documentary film style capture and present--fiction or reality?

He himself often imitates a newscast style, shot candid-camera fashion. In Vivre Sa Vie footage of prostitutes on the street, sometimes exchanging money, was shot directly on the streets of Paris. The assassination at the end of Le Petit Soldat was filmed in a long shot looking down on the streets of Geneva and has the documentary look of a real assassination. In speaking of the day that they filmed this shot, Godard noted that the Geneva citizens did not know that this violence was staged for a film yet none of the passersby acted shocked. In Masculine-Feminine many scenes were filmed either candidly or in a candid-camera style; one reason the film fails as social comment was that Godard did not comment on these scenes by means of his usual distancing effects. More distancing would have allowed for more comment on the social process thus captured directly. Much of Les Carabiniers looks like a newsreel and incorporates photos of actual wars. The film itself is printed in a very grainy print which Raoul Coutard spent much time working with the processors to achieve. The mundanity and tackiness of the locales in which war occurs gives the film the look of The March of Time even though its narrative is pure fantasy.

The use of documentary footage is particularly important in the more political



films. Like Brecht, Godard came to reject the ideology of naturalism. He found that the only authentic artistic realism lay in elucidating the social mechanism behind appearances, and that a correct view of reality had to be created and did not come from a presentation of surface appearances. Thus in Two or Three Things Godard presents images, very often extreme close ups, of what seems the least significant and most "natural" aspects of urban life (especially a housewife's life), and he uncovers the social structure and the ideology behind these so-called trivial or banal things--such as a box of soap, a gas station, or the daily routine of a working class wife with rising expectations stimulated by a consumer society. The documentary footage--the shots of apartment buildings and construction in Paris, pedestrians, stores and billboards--trace out at least implicitly the capitalist social relations that connect human life and necessities with the seemingly inhuman morass of images, construction, and things found in a contemporary urban milieu. Both visually and verbally Godard shows the interrelation of words, images, objects, architecture, city traffic, persons, and their relation to the film's theme: prostitution, taken in the larger sense as a metaphor for advanced capitalist France.

In Pravda photographic and documentary shots become the text of the film. The film analyzes revisionism in Czechoslovakia by means of analyzing images shot "candidly" and clandestinely in that country. Many of the images were shot from Czech television and western-style ads. The film also contains shots from inside factories and of construction sites, shots of stores, trains, tram cars, pedestrians, recreation sites, farm land, and missile sites. In the first section of Pravda, the commentary examines why these "prostituted" images exist. The sound track says that either the workers are prostituted because they have sold out control for a higher salary and consumer goods and services, or the images themselves are prostituted, as can be seen in the exploitation of women's bodies in images to sell goods. Finally the last section of the film combines the "lying" images--i.e., the exterior of Czech life captured in a candid, uncritical, and unanalytical way--with a "correct" sound, added in the montage. The film states that the purpose here is to "rediscover" what a just image might be.



## SYMBOLS AND EMBLEMS

From 1967 on Godard's films present social criticism within a complex, intellectualized message. Frequently Godard uses images, words and sounds not merely as pictorial or audio representations but as symbols, arbitrary abstraction of social concepts. This is particularly true of the Dziga Vertov group films of 1969. The organizing principle of Struggles in Italy, like Pravda, is that of repetition, in which the same images are gone over a number of different times with a certain degree of minimal variation in the images and the voice off commentary reevaluating the images in a successively more profound way. Often the image makes sense only in symbolic terms. In Struggles in Italy, a red frame stands for the protagonist's progress in understanding her own ideological stance and the reality behind it, and three photos of a factory symbolize the entire Marxist concept, "the means of production." In Pravda, there are repeated shots of a red streetcar, a child holding a red rose, and the rose lying in the mud with its petals blowing in the wind. These are symbols of that revolutionary Marxism which Godard sees as betrayed by Czech revisionism and Soviet invasion.

Although most directors of feature films have used the image primarily in its connotative, representational function, Sergei Eisenstein's theory and practice of a "montage of attractions" showed an early awareness of the symbolic possibilities of the film image. Eisenstein advocated a cinema that would be a conceptual discourse; abstract concepts should, he said, be conveyed by a collision of images abstracted from their ordinary context. With a similar intent, Godard in his films from Le Gai Savoir on, and Godard and Gorin in their co-productions, structured their films symbolically, waging an attack on unreflective photographic representation. More precisely, Godard's (and Godard and Gorin's) visual symbols are frequently emblems.

In general terms, an emblem can be defined as a picture accompanied by a word or a motto, occasionally by more extensive verbal exposition, for a moral or didactic purpose. Since cinema incorporates action and movement, both within the frame and by the camera, Godard's filmic emblems include gestures, such as a raised fist, and



camera movement. Movement from left to right in Pravda and Tout Va Bien is emblematic of political shifts. In general in Pravda, as in the other later films, Godard tries to strip an image such as the tram car or the rose of its multivalency and make it stand as a one-to-one symbol for some social or historical process. Even in his earlier films, he uses color emblematically. Red, white, and blue stands for the ties between French and American capitalism; red alone stands for a purified communism, not the traitorous French Communist Party version. This pure communism is also frequently symbolized by the word *lutte* (struggle) written over a photo or on a white frame in red.

In La Chinoise the book Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung with its characteristic red cover; red, white and blue paint (which represents the French flag); blackboards; a playlet about Vietnam; an imitation of Brechtian acting--all these become visual symbols of the historical moment in which these bourgeois revolutionaries have decided to prepare themselves to act. The images in Le Gai Savoir, Wind from the East, Pravda, and Struggles in Italy, are mainly emblematic and they are gone over and over in the spirit of self-critique. Thus Mao's principle of criticism-self-criticism-transformation is not only treated conceptually but becomes a basic visual and audio structuring device for these films. Repeated phrases, songs, or ideas emphasize some historical or social process and often "explain" the visual track. In the opening of Vladimir and Rosa, for example, Godard repeats the words *théoriquement* and *pratiquement* (theoretically, practically), and repeats shots of Lenin, a young man studying, a movie camera, and a tape recorder. In the film at repeated points voices over comment on filmmakers' need to learn how to create "just" images and sounds to portray militant activity and aid it. Words that occur in the films as verbal leit-motifs and which appear on the visual track written in script are *lutte*, *révolution*, *révisioniste*, *théorie*. Such a description makes Godard's technique sound very dry, but actually in these three films from 1968 and 1969, he shares that delight in the graffiti, zany photos, and political posters--especially from Cuba and China--that accompanied the occupation of the Sorbonne. In Vladimir and Rosa, titled after



Vladimir Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, these two political leaders are symbolized by the emblems of "Vladimir" and "Rosa" hippie tee-shirts. The inserted posters, photos, cartoons, and magazine pictures with Godard's writing across them sometimes present a straight forward political message but are usually both witty and political. In the films from 1968 on the dialogue provides a commentary on the imagery, and the written words--usually positive political "signals"--often act as the motto or inscription which gives the didactic lesson of the traditional emblem.

#### THE WRITTEN WORD

Not just in these films but throughout his cinematic career, Godard usually incorporates two-dimensional inserts such as photos and titles into the film in a distanced way. He uses them to interfere with cinematic continuity, break up dramatic tension, and rob the film narrative of its unbroken illusion of depth and motion. The writing across the image, the words on ads and book jackets, and the inserted titles often serve the function of summary statements within the narrative. In Two or Three Things, for example, words that serve as titles for sequences are filmed partly from billboards but especially from the book covers in the paperback series, "Idées." The word IDÉES itself appears as a title several times in the film. Godard uses the covers of known scholarly works because the works' content brings facts and issues from the outside world to bear on the narrative of the film. Such shots--the content of the titles alone is sufficient if the spectator is not familiar with the texts--open up new intellectual contexts that amplify the social, cultural, and political context within which to consider this film. And the film also offers a new context within which to reconsider the value of the scholarly works themselves, for Godard wants us to evaluate the capitalist marketing and consumption of ideas.

In The Married Woman Godard uses the printed word to show in a distanced way all the circumstances that make a certain ideological stance possible and even probable, here the myth of romance. In one sequence Charlotte tries to eavesdrop on two teenaged women telling about their first sexual experiences. She feels perhaps they have some passion or sense of authentic experience which she cannot feel. But their



dreams are no "purer" than hers. Their emotions and sexual decisions are shaped by the same things impinging on Charlotte. Charlotte pages through a magazine, and as the <sup>younger women's</sup> ~~girls'~~ conversation is first heard, we see in close up the ads for women's underwear, sanitary napkins, cigarettes, etc.. Godard also intercuts close ups of Charlotte with inserts of printed words from the magazine:

VOICI CE QUE TOUT FEEME DOIT SAVOIR (Here's What Every Woman Ought to Know)

ELLE LE SAIT (She Knows It)

ELLE NE LE SAIT PAS (She Doesn't Know It)

As the camera shows us the young women talking, their most intimate experiences are related to us by subtitles. At the same time that we feel the pathos of their sincerity, we also notice the artifice of the subtitles. They do not translate everything but merely summarize. There is as much of a gap between "reality" and film as between a conversation and the summary subtitles. In effect the subtitles make <sup>young women's</sup> ~~their~~ decisions seem trivial and once again raise the question of cinema's "honesty"--how much truth it conveys, what kind of truth, and what it leaves out.

Not only does Godard use the written word as a "motto" for an emblem or as a title for a sequence, but he also seems to be fascinated with the semantic and linguistic possibilities of isolated words and phrases. He combines and plays with many kinds of syntaxes all at once: kinetic, color, verbal, cinematic, and poetic syntax. As James Ronald Green noted, Godard often uses written words in the way that concrete poets do, particularly in the titles flashed on the screen during the film or in his writing on the image. Sometimes the words fascinate us as visual abstractions; at other times they call attention to their form in a self-reflective way. Godard captures the tension between motion and stasis in the material process of writing and reading and shows the kinesis inherent in that process, a kinesis we usually only perceive as the movement from left to right in reading, and from the top to the bottom of the page or screen. He often renders points simultaneously--by flashing a text or various elements of it on the screen, often at different points in the rectangular composition of the frame; by multiple presentations of



the same word, either in one image or successively; or by presenting a very short message rapidly for the audience to read in one glance.

### CINEMATIC CITATION

In the type of imagery which he incorporates on the level of the shot and in the the composition of the shot, Godard elicits a reflection on the visual medium itself. Perhaps the most obvious way in which Godard's films are self-reflexive texts is in their citation of other films. Godard uses within his films movie posters, real-life film directors playing themselves, clips from others' films, and a wide range of loving imitation of the shots and styles of many directors. In his borrowings of film texts and references, Godard often makes the original source obvious, either as a joke or as a serious reinforcement of the theme (Michel encounters a *Cahiers du cinéma* hawker in Breathless; Charlotte did not know what Auschwitz was and watches Night and Fog in The Married Woman).

To critique the "truth" of newscasts and documentary films, in almost all his films Godard utilizes sequences of distanciated film interviews, either with real, historically important personages or with the characters. Each time, he provokes reflection on the degree of communication achieved by any interview, the bias of the questioner, the pose of the respondent, and the kind of information that is or can be gained. In visual style, these sequences, often shot in a single take with an immobile camera, look like a parody of television interviews. Godard plays with this visual-verbal convention in order to interrogate the function of languages and communication in general.

His use of parody, of television styles, and of film-within-film is sometimes merely a tour de force but more often serves to comment on the dream world of film and television and its effect on both the lives of the characters in his films and by implication on our lives. In his pre-68 films he undermines this dream world from within the cinema of spectacle. After '68 his attack is more direct, and he tries to create a totally different film form and function. In Made in U.S.A. and Wind from the East, the dream world of Hollywood cinema is seen to be the major



ideological reinforcement of American imperialism. The films from 1968 on refute traditional cinema and television and the economic mechanisms that maintain them. In these films Godard makes this attack both in his aesthetic and political commentary and in their ascetic, emblematic, intellectualized form.

#### THE LONG TAKE AND COLOR CONTROL

I must emphasize that Godard's cinematic innovations are often delightful for their sheer virtuosity and not necessarily significant for any social comment. This is true of his mastery of the long take and of the Technicolor spectrum. In his direction of his actors, Godard has always absorbed chance into his work, but, especially in the earlier films, we sense his directorial presence behind the spontaneous gestures captured by the camera and behind the composition of the frame and the seemingly free camera movements. Godard makes us clearly aware of the virtuosity of the long takes which he often uses to film "natural" settings, whether outdoors or indoors in places such as apartments or Parisian cafes. He achieves a distancing effect by making the technique as noticable as the story. Furthermore, because of his editing technique, that which was captured perhaps spontaneously is always presented in a highly intellectualized form, as a constant interrogation of how sense is transmitted and practiced in film.

Godard is extremely versatile in his use of the long take. Characteristic of his films from 1966 on, as Brian Henderson points out, is a lateral tracking shot that always films objects and people at a critical distance from the camera; the characters are arranged within just a single plane. In such shots Godard's frames seem flat, and this flatness changes the way the viewer "reads" the image. It makes it easier to explore or elicit a new reading of the semiotic codes within that image, particularly in terms of Godard's intent in the film as a whole.

Not only does the long take distanciate the presentation of the urban milieu so that we are more aware of the social codes in the mise-en-scene, but both fluid and "flat" long takes are used to film conversations in an unconventional way. Godard interferes with the "naturalness" of a conversation over and over again--in



the conversations and arguments between couples in Le Petit Soldat, A Woman is a Woman, Contempt, and La Chinoise, and in the entire relations between the students living together in La Chinoise as well. He uses his cinematic technique to reflect both on the "rules" of a conversation as such interactions might occur in daily life and also on how they traditionally have been filmed.

Godard often uses long takes to reject film as entertainment and to criticize society. Masculine-Feminine was shot with an almost completely fixed camera. In addition, Godard put important details at the very edge of the screen and/or on it only momentarily, again reinforcing the film's theme of the problems of communication. One Plus One was planned as an Andy Warhol-type film which was to be shot in either eight ten-minute takes or ten eight-minute ones. British Sounds, following the same pattern, opened with a long ten-minute tracking shot of workers on an actual assembly line in England while the commentary referred to the causes of alienation, defined in Marxist terms, and the boredom that the workers suffered. Wind from the East opened with four shots, each lasting about four minutes and without movement; their static, even boring quality was an attack on entertainment film and bourgeois concepts of representation.

Although sometimes Godard uses color romantically, he also uses it symbolically or specifically for narrative distancing. He stripped the political act in La Chinoise of all drama by filming the "assassination" sequence in excessively cheerful color, and <sup>he</sup> similarly filmed reenactments of student protests in bright color in Vladimir and Rosa and Tout Va Bien. On the other hand, he used a restrained black and white somberness to express the banality of violence in Le Petit Soldat, Les Carabiniers, and Alphaville. Masculine-Feminine, which Godard said was the first film in which he tried to analyze France politically, was shot in very dark grey tones. Les Carabiniers was processed three times to get a special grainy effect like newsreel photography. Alphaville was also shot in grainy black-and-white film, the harsh contrasts of which were emphasized in Godard's use of single-source lighting, such as an uncovered bulb swinging from a wire. Le Gai Savoir was one of the



first films in which Godard "stripped down" the image so as to examine language; the film was shot in color, but the action (conversations) took place mostly against the background of a blacked out room.

#### MODERNIST AND BRECHTIAN DISTANCIATION

Chronologically, Godard's films follow the Theater of the Absurd in the height of its popularity in the fifties in France as much as the Brecht "revolution" in France. Godard's films use certain techniques reminiscent of the Absurdist. He shares Ionesco's preoccupation with the problems of translation and the cultural devaluation of words, the banality of language, the accumulation and intensification of symbolic visual details. Like Beckett, he uses metaphorical sets, often farcical dialogue, and fragmented characterization. Arthur Adamov's use of abrupt, brutal violence, usually social violence, as a structuring device in his narratives reminds one of all the automobile accidents, murders, and moments of violence artificially presented in Godard's films. The image of a character being run over by a car and being swept off the street into the garbage by street cleaners, found in Adamov's The Parody, could also have come from a film like Weekend.

However, visual artists from Expressionism and Dada to Pop Art and concrete poetry have used visual elements such as those used by Godard, particularly letters and numerals, precisely for their shock value and the incongruity of their incorporation within an otherwise representative scene. Beyond enjoying surprising audiences with an ever-new presentation of once-familiar types of visual material, Godard almost always uses non-narrative inserts to make us think about the social process behind what we see. Like the Pop artists, and also the concrete poets, Godard delights in an art that takes as its matter all social communication: messages and their content and their modes of presentation. Yet unlike these other modern artists, Godard uses inserted photographic and symbolic material to expand on its signification, and he never tries to reduce the signification of an image, as a Pop artist might, or annul it as a "new novelist" and filmmaker such as Alain Robbe-Grillet has tried to do. Godard's most political films are Brechtian. They are



about ideas. And to express ideas Godard has simultaneously created new cinematic equivalents for them and has imparted a whole range of intellectual, sociological, political, psychological, and artistic concepts which he has found expressed in images from his own milieu.